

Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Governance

Role of policy entrepreneurs and social norm entrepreneurs

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Due to the role that globalization has played during last decades, policy makers faces new challenges that are not easily met by the current global institutions that were created to deal with crises of the Twentieth Century. Current policy challenges have large-scale impacts and are really hard to predict. One example is climate change, a threat so serious that can increase sea levels, intensify natural disasters and jeopardize food security worldwide (Goldin, 2013). Being said this, one would think that it is logical for policy makers to immediately address issues like carbon emissions. However, people in power rarely act as unselfish decision-makers. Instead, they try, as most humans do, to logically maximize their career success (Geddes, 1994).

Cycling, for example, is recognized as the favorite solution to mobility and as an effective way to reduce the human ecological footprint. However, it took 19 years for the Vancouver Municipality to finally implement a bicycle lane in the Burrard Bridge —the most direct link between the affluent west side and downtown highly populated neighborhoods— since the city developed its strategy to address global climate change (Siemiatycki et al., 2014). Why? Because in forming policy, political parties try to follow the wishes of voters. While safety problems for cyclists and pedestrians on the Burrard Street Bridge first spared political actions in 1996, they also faced strong opposition from residents, motorists, retail business owners and others negatively impacted by the expansion of biking spaces (p. 226).

As Downs (1957) explains, “the government is never willing to incur the loss of A's vote to gain the favour of B (...) because it has no reason to regard B as more important than A”. This paralysis and uncertainty offered the perfect scenario for political entrepreneurs —advocates who are willing to invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, and money to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain (1984)— to advance their objectives. Enter mayoral candidate Gregor Robertson and Peter Ladner. The former offered to reallocate a single lane of vehicle traffic to bikes while the latter intended to install barriers between the bridge sidewalks (to be shared by bikers and pedestrians) and vehicle lanes. As Geddes (1994) explains, infrastructure projects can easily be directed to benefit supporters of specific political parties and this was clearly the case in the competition among those running for office.

In 2008, the year of the municipal election, the city was intensifying its urban form, there was a growth in traffic and an increased use of non-motorized bicycles, which by that time gained favorable attitudes from the public. Of the 45% of those who agreed with the one-lane trial, 62% planned to vote for Robertson. Vision Vancouver accurately sized a political window, which predictably appear with new administrations (Kingdon, 1984).

Individual preferences about this change in norms were nothing but heterogenous, and we can explain this using the framework provided by Ellickson (2001). First, citizens have different endowments, as a result not all actors received the same benefits. The bikers who use the bridge everyday would have much more benefit than those who use it once a year. Pedestrians with pulmonary diseases will gain more from less emissions when compared with the average user. Second, discount rates are also variable. Drivers who are more future-oriented could easily support the heavy traffic during the first months thinking that in the long-run more bikers equals

less cars in the road. This also exemplifies how different levels of technical knowledge can ease the change of social norms.

At the end, what determined the victory of Vision Vancouver's Gregor Robertson, was the higher level of both social intelligence and his leadership skills. Robertson accurately positioned himself as "prudently green," he was neither "a wild two-lane person" nor a stubborn promoter of the war on bikes; and took special steps to ensure that city stuff—which was originally against the proposal—understood his commitment (Siemiatycki et al., 2014).

While the proposal faced opposition of the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition, the Coalition of Progressive Electors, cycling advocates and staff, because they preferred a two-lane plan. Robertson was wise not to get convinced by these lobbyists. In these situations, political leaders must not forget that a norm change is more likely to happen not only for its potential benefits but how much the electorate already desires them (Downs, 1957). Cyclists are a minority so most of the people might not weigh equally the benefits of a two-lane bike road. Heavy traffic could easily upset them and jeopardize the future of the project, as happened in 1996, when the city closed two lanes. Additionally, the one-lane proposal satisfied Kaldor-Hicks criteria, which states that a given population would favor a norm change if its beneficiaries would gain enough to be potentially able to compensate the members who would lose from such change (Ellickson, 2001). By closing one lane instead of two, motorists felt that they were being compensated. Similarly, while some pedestrians manifested discomfort for being obliged to use one sidewalk only, they could now use it without being worried about potential encounters with bikers. Finally, bicycle riders could finally flow in both directions without molesting either pedestrians or drivers.

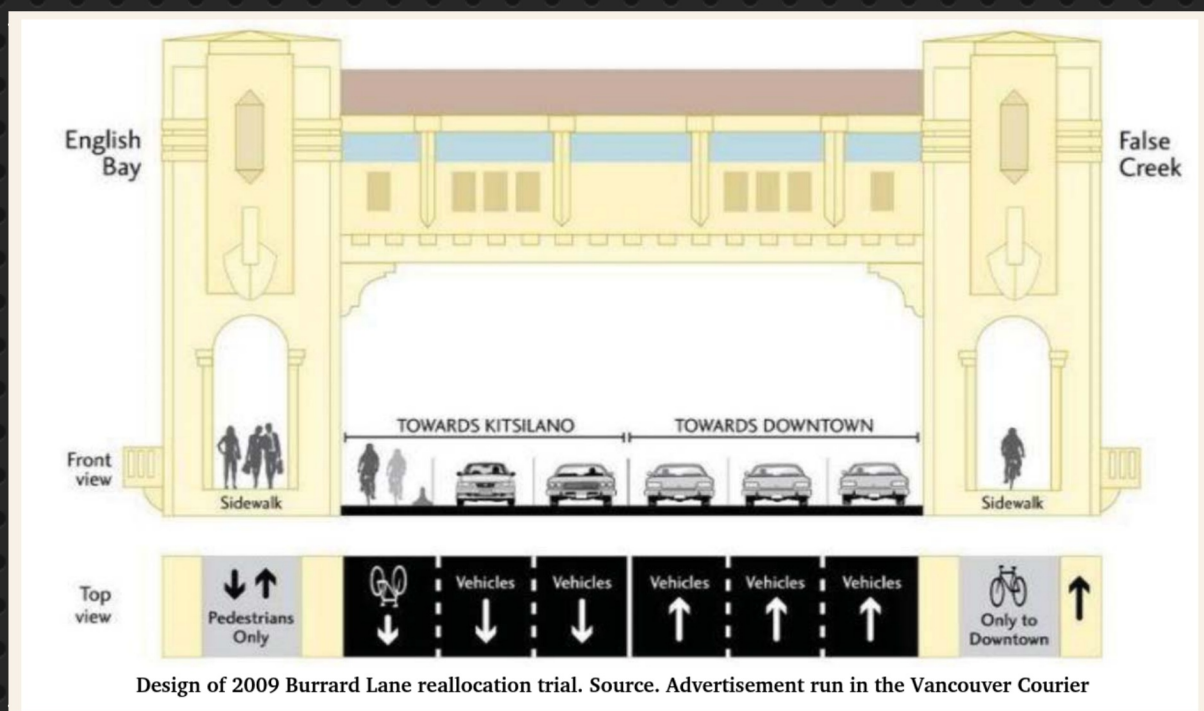
Nearly half of Vancouver's population was not fully convinced before the first trial at the bridge. In this scenario, where voters are not sure about how a specific policy change would affect them, they need more facts to establish a clear preference (Downs, 1957). By providing facts focused on the safety benefits of the plan for all the users of the bridge—through mass media advertising, banners placed on the bridge, and extensive information in interviews, their website and social media—, these persuaders found their opportunity to become effective.

Bibliography

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Policy Entrepreneurs

The case of the Burrard Bridge Bike Lane



On 2009, Vancouver made the third attempt to implement a bike lane in the Burrard bridge. Bikers, pedestrians and motorists all had less space than they used to but more than what they expected as a result of the effective design. Safety was the core message of the proposal!



Political leadership from Major Robertson was crucial. His staff, party and voters initially thought that the bike lane would remain a campaign promise. However he managed to successfully implement it

Vancouver City gave birth to Green Peace in the early 1970s and hosted the first United Nations World Urban Forum in 1976. It was the first city to develop a strategy to address global climate change.



**Bike trips
have
increased
over time**

1 million

1.4 millions

2010

2015